

WRIGHT BROTHERS MASTER PILOT AWARD

Fairbanks Flight Standards District
Office Honoree 2004



WEIN, Noel Merrill. Noel Merrill Wien was born April 4, 1930, in Virginia, MN while his parents, Noel and Ada Wien were vacationing there. When he was six weeks old, he rode around the states in a 1929 Stinson with his parents. A wicker clothesbasket served as his crib in the airplane. After touring various air shows his father and uncle Sig flew the airplane back to Alaska and he and his mom took a train to Seattle and then a steamship to Alaska.

While growing up in Fairbanks, Merrill worked at his father's hangar to earn money for flying lessons. He logged a lot of right- and front-seat time with his father in Alaska. His parents moved to Seattle for a couple of years and he soloed on his 16th birthday at Boeing Field. Merrill said he thinks his mother must have fainted, as he now knows how his mother felt as both of his sons soloed on their 16th birthday. Merrill went on to earn his commercial and instrument ratings at age 19.

In May 1950 he began flying as co-pilot on DC-3s and bush planes for Wien Airlines. Later that year he left college and began flying DC-4s for PanAm based in Seattle. At that time he was the youngest pilot to ever be hired by PanAm. He enlisted in the Air Force, and received flight training at Marana Air Base near Tucson, AZ. Merrill graduated from pilot training just as the Korean War was wrapping up and he spent the last six months in the Air Force flying an Air Rescue Squadron Grumman SA-16 Albatross based at Ladd Field in Fairbanks.

After the Air Force, he returned to flying for Wien Airlines as a DC-3 captain, and also logged time in the C-46, DC-4, 749 Constellation, Fairchild F-27, Boeing 737 and 727. Merrill also flew the Wien bush fleet -- Cessna 185, 195, Twin Beech, and the Pilatus Porter. During the mid 1960's he flew a number of missions to the T-3 ice island approximately 600 miles north of Barrow, in support of a Navy research program. After leaving Wien Airlines Merrill flew Lockheed 1011's all over the world for Total Air.

In 1959 Merrill, his brother Richard, Stan Halverson, and Doug Millard started a company called Merric, Inc. Their first contracts were flying B-25 fire fighting aircraft for the Bureau of Land Management. Later, they added helicopters to the fleet. In the early 1970s the company was sold to Rowan Drilling of Houston, TX and was merged with ERA Helicopters.

In 1990 Merrill retired from scheduled airline flying and spent two years in Alaska flying C-46 cargo planes around the state. His C-46 time attracted

National Designated Pilot Examiner
Representative [Randy Sohn](#), which led
to flying "Fifi" -- the only flying Boeing
B-29 and becoming a National
Designated Pilot Examiner
Representative himself.

In 1999 Merrill and Richard made a
flight in a Stearman from Anchorage to
Fairbanks in commemoration of the 75th
anniversary of the first flight made over
that route by their father.

Merrill and his wife, Barbara, live on
Orcas Island in Puget Sound,
Washington, where he works as the
Executive Director of Flight Operations
for the [Heritage Flight Museum](#), and
flies a Broussard -- a French version of a
Beaver -- and a Stearman.